

Message Text

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51 45

ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-07 NSCE-00 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 PRS-01 L-02 IO-03 DPW-01 DRC-01

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R 041245Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5217

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

COMUSSAG

SECDEF

CJCS

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 3231

LIMDIS

C O R R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MILI, CB

SUBJECT: RALLIERS REAL OR FAKE: THE PHLEK PHOEUN EFFORT

1. SUMMARY. PRESENTING "RALLIERS" FOR THE PRESIDENT TO WELCOME BACK TO THE FOLD HAS BEEN A PROFITABLE IF HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE SIDELINE FOR MANY PHNOM PENH POLITICIANS. THE LARGEST SUCH VENTURE TO DATE, A SCHEME WHICH WOULD ALLEGEDLY PRODUCE OVER 20,000 RALLIERS AND OPEN UP PRINCIPAL ROUTES IF RPT IF FANK COOPERATES, HAD LED RESPONSIBLE FANK OFFICERS TO CRY FRAUD. THE PROJECT'S PROMOTERS, WHO INCLUDE A CONSTITUTIONAL COURT JUSTICE, A PROMINENT NATIONAL ASSEMBLYMAN AND OTHER WELL KNOWN POLITICANS, HAVE IN TURN ACCUSED THEIR MILITARY CRITICS OF SINISTER PLOTS TO SABOTAGE THEIR EFFORT IN ORDER TO PROLONG THE WAR. WORD OF THIS CONFRONTATION HAS NOW REACHED THE PRESS, AND AN EXTENSIVE
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AIRING OF RALLIER DIRTY LINEN MAY BE IN THE OFFING. THE

DIFFICULTY OF DISPROVING CLAIMS OF CONTACT WITH THE "OTHER SIDE," HOWEVER, SUGGESTS THAT A DEFINITIVE RESOLUTION OF THE MATTER MAY NOT BE REACHED. BECAUSE OF THIS CASE'S POTENTIAL POLITICAL IMPACT AND BECAUSE OF THE INSIGHT IT PROVIDES INTO RALLIER PROBLEMS, IT IS DESCRIBED IN DETAIL BELOW. END SUMMARY.

2. THE EMBASSY WAS FIRST INFORMED OF THE RALLIER PROJECT IN JCEMBER BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER AND AT THE TIME SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY SECRETARY GENERALS DANG THUNAK, WHO GAVE IT HIS PERSONAL SUPPORT BECAUSE PROMINENT SOCIO-REPUBLICANS WERE BEHIND IT AND BECAUSE ONE OF THE RALLIERS HAD PROVIDED EVIDENCE OF SERVING WITH A GUERRILLA UNIT KNOWN BY HAK DURING HIS DAYS IN THE MAQUIS. HANV THUN HAK PROVIDED THE EMBASSY WITH A LONG LIST OF WOULD-BE RALLIERS UNDER A HENG SAMBOT, WHO CLAIMED TO BE COMMANDER OF AUTONOMOUS SECTOR 16 IN THE WESTERN PART OF CAMBODIA. THE LIST WAS RESULT OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN HENG SAMBOT'S REPRESENTATIVES AND A TEAM LED BY CONSTITUTIONAL COURT JUDGE AND FORMER MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS PHLEK PHOEUN, DEPUTY THACH CHAN, SUY KIM HUON AND MEAS YANG, WHO HAD RECEIVED 11 MILLION RIELS FROM PRESIDENT LON NOL TO PROMOTE THE RALLYING OF THIS AND ALLIED GROUPS TOTALING IN ALL SOME 20,000. HENG THUN HAK REQUESTED THE EMBASSY'S COMMENTS ON THE BONA FIDES OF THIS GROUP AND ON THEIR REQUEST THAT THEY BE PLACED ON FANK ROLLS WHILE REMAINING IN THE TERRITORY THEY NOW OCCUPY. THE EMBASSY IN THIS AND SUBSEQUENT CONTACTS WITH THE PROJECT'S SPONSORS NOTED THAT THE NAMES OF UNITS AND COMMANDERS DID NOT APPEAR IN OUR INFORMATION ON ENEMY FORCES AND THAT, WHILE WE WOULD NOT WISH TO ADVISE THE GKR ON ITS RALLIER ACTIVITIES, WE WOULD OBJECT TO THE USE OF COUNTERPART FUNDS TO PAY THE SALARIES OF RALLIER-SOLDIERS WHO HAD NOT PASSED THROUGH THE REGULAR FANK PERSONNEL ACCESSION, TRAINING AND ASSIGNMENT PROCESSES.

3. COLONEL THACH RENG, WHO COORDINATES RALLIER AFFAIRS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CHARGED WITH VERIFYING THE BONA FIDES OF RALLIERS WITHIN THIS GROUP PRIOR TO THEIR INDUCTION INTO FANK. THACH RENG'S CHECKS
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WITH FANK G-2 FILES, LIKE THOSE OF THE EMBASSY, WERE NEGATIVE. IN THE FACE OF PHLEK PHOEUN'S AND THACH CHAN'S CONTINUED INSISTANCE THAT THE RALLIERS WERE GENUINE, THACH RENG, BEGINNING ON JANUARY 25 SENT TEAMS TO A NUMBER OF POSITIONS, MOSTLY WATS, AROUND PHNOM PENH'S PERIMETER AT WHICH RALLIERS WERE SUPPOSED TO APPEAR. ONLY A FEW "RALLIERS" APPEARED AT THESE RENDEZVOUS POINTS, MOST OF WHOM APPEARED TO BE REFUGEES FROM PHNOM PENH AND SOME OF

WHOM WERE FANK DESERTERS. ALTHOUGH VERIFICATION OF THESE RALLIERS WAS THEN CONFIDED TO A MIXED MILITARY-CIVILIAN COMMITTEE HEADED BY THE FANK G-2 COLONEL KOUROUDETH, THACH RENG'S MEN CONTINUED THEIR INVESTIGATION. THEY REPORTED THAT PHLEK PHOEUN'S AGENTS WERE BRIBING MILITARY TO DESERT AND PROMISING REFUGEES OR VILLAGERS LAND IN FANK CONTROLLED AREAS. ACCORDING TO THESE INVESTIGATORS, CANDIDATE RALLIERS WERE GIVEN A 2 OR 3 DAY COURSE IN KHMER RUMDOH VOCABULARY BEFORE BEING LED TO RENDEZVOUS POINTS, WERE THREATENED WITH DEATH IF THEY REVEALED THE PLOT AND WERE IN SOME INSTANCE KILLED FOR INSISTING ON REJOINING THEIR FAMILIES.

4. THACH CHAN IN FOUR SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS, THE LATEST ON MARCH 1, STRONGLY DEFENDED HIS RALLIER PROGRAM AND ACCUSED UNNAMED "PROFITEERS" OF ATTEMPTING TO SABOTAGE IT TO PROLONG THE WAR. THESE SINISTER ELEMENTS, THACH CHAN CLAIMED, HAVE INFILTRATED HIS RALLIER GROUPS IN ORDER TO DISCREDIT THEM, HAVE GRILLED PROSPECTIVE RALLIERS TO INTIMIDATE THEM, AND HAVE MISTREATED AND EVEN KILLED RALLIERS TO INSURE THAT OTHERS DID NOT FOLLOW THEIR LEAD. THACH CHAN ALSO SUGGESTED THAT FANK UNITS MIGHT BE BLOCKING THE ACCESS OF RALLIERS TO POINTS OF CONTACT ALTHOUGH HE DENIED A REPORT FROM ANOTHER EMBASSY CONTACT (CHHOENG SOPHAN, AN ASSOCIATE OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER YEM SAMBAUR) THAT FANK ARTILLERY AND AIR HAD KILLED 100 OF HENG SAMBOT'S MEN AS THEY MOVED TO A RALLYING POINT.

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-07 NSCE-00 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 PRS-01 L-02 IO-03 DPW-01 DRC-01

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R 041245Z MAR 74

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5218

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON
COMUSSAG
SECDEF
CJCS
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 3231

LIMDIS

5. THACH CHAN'S ACCOUNTS OF RALLIER INTENTIONS AND OF
HIS OWN ENDEAVORS HAVE LACKED CREDITIBILITY.

A. IN HIS FIRST MEETING WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS THACH
CHAN SAID THAT SEVERAL THOUSAND RALLIERS WOULD GATHER
AT REAM ON THE COSAT FOR A RECEPTION CEREMONY OVER WHICH
PRESIDENT LON NOL WOULD PRESIDE. IN A SECOND MEETING THACH CHAN
ASKED FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE TO FLY SEVERAL HUNDRED RALLIERS
TO REAM FROM PHNOM PENH FOR THE CEREMONY BUT COULD NOT
EXPLAIN WHY THESE MAQUISARDS, WHO REPUTED TO BE FROM THE
WESTERN REGION, COULD NOT MAKE THEIR WAY TO REAM WHILE
HUNDREDS HAD SHOWN UP IN PHNOM PENH. (THE REAM
CEREMONY WAS NOT HELD.)

B. MOST REVJJJBX
SHACH CHAN CLAIMED THAT, IF
THE GKR PROVES ITS GOOD FAITH, A TOTAL OF 25,000
RALLIERS WILL INVITE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES TO
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COME TO THEM MOAPIXRSW HAVE "CDDNF
NZQUTE 4, ROUTE
3 TO TRAM KHNR AND ROUTE 1 TO SVAY RIENG AND DE-
CLARED THEM OPEN." PROSPECTIVE RALLIERS ON THE
EAST BANK OF THE MEKONG NEAR VIHEAR SUOR, THACH CHAN
ADDED, WILL INVITE FANK TO A THREE DAY FESTIVAL IN
NO-MAN'S LAND WHERE TERMS FOR RALLYING CAN BE DIS-
CUSSED. WHEN ASKED FOR NAMES OF UNITS AND LEADERS
WHO WILL RALLY AS WELL AS THEIR COMMENTS ON KC
PRESENCE IN THESE AREAS, THACH CHAN REPLIED THAT HIS
CONTACTS WERE RELUCTANT TO RELEASE SUCH INFORMATION.

C. THACH CHAN SAID THAT THE 11 MILLION RIELS HIS
GROUP HAD RECEIVED FROM THE PRESIDENT HAD ALREADY
BEEN SPENT (MOSTLY FOR AUTOMOBILES AND SCOOTERS "TO
MAKE CONTACTS IN PHNOM PENH") AND THAT THE PROGRAM IS
NOW BEING FINANCED BY HIS AND HIS FRIENDS' PERSONAL
RESOURCES. HE OBVIOUSLY HOPES, HOWEVER, THAT FURTHER
PRESIDENTIAL STIPENDS WILL BE FORTHCOMING.

6. A GROUP OF SLIGHTLY OVER 500 "RALLIERS" WHO APPEARED AT WAT ANG SNOUL SAMPOL ON ROUTE 4 HAVE NOW BEEN PUT FORWARD BY THACH CHAN TO PROVE THE AUTHENTICITY OF HIS VENTURE. ONLY IF THIS GROUP IS WELL TREATED, THACH CHAN EXPLAINED, WILL THE OTHER 25,000 ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS. THACH CHAN HAS BEEN SHOWING AROUND PHOTOGRAPH ALBUMS OF THIS GROUP AND INVITED THE AP REPRESENTATIVE TO THE PLACE WHERE THEY WERE ASSEMBLED. HE ALSO PERMITTED THE EMBASSY'S KHMER SPEAKING LANGUAGE OFFICER TO TALK TO THEM ON MARCH 3. THE GROUP'S PURPORTED LEADERS TOLD THE EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVE THAT THEY BROKE WITH THE VIETNAMESE IN 1971, ESTABLISHED AN AUTONOMOUS "16TH SECTOR" AND FORMED BATTALIONS NUMBERED 01 THROUGH 08. THEY SAID THEY HAD NOT FOUGHT OUTSIDE THEIR AREA AND HAVE HAD NO RELATIONS WITH A HIGHER HEADQUARTERS OF THE KC CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THEY CLAIMED THEIR HEADQUARTERS WAS A 24-HOUR MARCH FROM ROUTE 4 BUT WOULD NOT GIVE ITS LOCATION FOR FEAR KAF WOULD BOMB IT. THEY DISPLAYED AN IMPRESSIVE ARSENAL OF WEAPONS INCLUDING 30 CALIBRE MACHINE GUNS AND 60MM MORTARS. AS A CLIMAX TO THE EMBOFF'S VISIT P YOUNG BOYS AND GIRLS SANG "REVOLUTIONARY SONGS" WITH VIGOR AND
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SKILL.

7. COLONEL KOUROUDETH HAS ALSO HAD A CHANCE TO EVALUATE THE ANG SNOUL RALLIERS. HIS VIEWS, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND WERE GIVEN TO FANK COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MG SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ ORALLY AND ARE BEING INCORPORATED INTO A WRITTEN REPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT, ARE THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE ANG SNOUL AROUND ARE PHNOM PENH RESIDENTS PAID TO POSE AS RALLIERS.

8. COMMENT: THERE IS HIGHLY CONVINCING BUT NOT COMPLETELY CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAT PHLEK PHOEUN'S AND THACH CHAN'S RALLIER OPERATION IS AN ELABORATE FRAUD. WE ARE NOT CONFIDENT THAT THIS EVIDENCE WILL PERMIT OPPONENTS WITHIN FANK TO BRING THE PROJECT TO A RAPID FINISH, HOWEVER. ITS PROMOTERS HAVE GREAT FAITH IN THEIR POWERS OF PERSUASION AND ARE APPARENTLY DETERMINED TO MEET ALL CHALLENGES HEAD ON. AMONG THE FACTORS AIDING THEM IS THE EARLY BACKING THEY GOT FROM THE PRESIDENT AND OTHER IMPORTANT POLITICAL LEADERS WHICH HAS MADE EVEN THOSE CIVILIANS WHO DEPLORE THEIR ACTIONS RELUCTANT TO CONDEMN THEM. THEY WILL ALSO PROFIT FROM A GENERAL KHMER DESIRE TO BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE SUCH SHORT-CUTS TO PEACE. SINCE IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO PROVE THAT THESE PROMINENT POLITICIANS HAVE NOT HAD CONTACT WITH LEADERS ON "THE OTHER SIDE", AND THAT FANK HAS NOT SABOTAGED THEIR PLANS, THE GKR VQ HAVE A QBBLE ON ITS HANDS.
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NOTE BY OC/T: PHNOM PENH 3231 SECTION 2 OF 2 GARBLED THROUGHOUT.
CORRECTIONS TO FOLLOW

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